

REMARKS

The Official Action of June 7, 2004, and the prior art relied upon therein have been carefully reviewed. The claims in the application are now claims 1-5 and 7-9, and these claims should now be in condition for formal allowance consistent with what is stated in the Official Action. Accordingly, applicants hereby respectfully request favorable consideration and early formal allowance.

The examiner's helpful suggestion concerning the incorporation of a transition term between the preamble of claim 1 and the body of claim 1 has been adopted by amendment above. This amendment is not a substantial amendment relating to patentability, and is not a "narrowing" amendment because the scope of the claims has not been reduced by this amendment. No limitations have been added by said amendment and none are intended.

Claims 6-9 have been objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim, but have otherwise been indicated as being directed to "allowable" subject matter. Applicants therefore understand that claims 6-9 are deemed by the PTO to define novel and unobvious subject matter under Sections 102 and 103.

Accordingly, claim 1 has now been amended to incorporate the subject matter of claim 6 therein, thus converting claim 1 in independent form to the equivalent of claim 6 in independent form. Thus, claim 1 (now equivalent to allowable claim 6) and the claims which depend therefrom, i.e. all the claims in the present application, should now be in formal condition for allowance.

Claims 1-4 were rejected under Section 102 as anticipated by Facer USP '188, and claim 5 was rejected as obvious under Section 103 from Facer in view of Zwann '904. In view of the amendments presented above incorporating claim 6 into claim 1, and wherein claim 6 was not subject to any rejection based on prior art, applicants need not further reply to these rejections at the present time.

However, for the record, the applicants respectfully reserve their rights, including those rights provided by Section 120, to pursue additional claims in a continuing application, if applicants choose to do so.

The prior art documents made of record and not relied upon have been noted, along with the implication that such documents are deemed by the PTO to be insufficiently pertinent to warrant their application against any of applicants' claims.

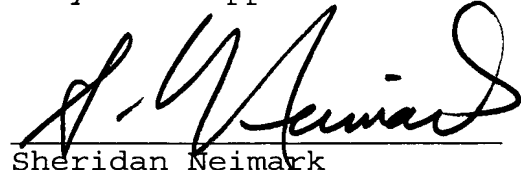
Appln. No. 10/615,031
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Reply to Office Action of June 7, 2004

Applicants respectfully request favorable
consideration and early formal allowance.

Respectfully submitted,

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